CHAPTER XI

PINES

T 137 Our trail wound through low bush and second growth. Here and there on hills were islands of high forest, but the level ground formerly under cultivation was now covered with an impenetrable network of low bushes and thorny brambles.

T 241 Indian agriculture is very simple. Towards the end of the dry season the Indian selects a place in the forest for his corn field, and makes an extensive clearing. All trees and branches are cut in small pieces, and left to dry in the baking sun. When thoroughly dry they set fire to them, and in a short while the ground is clear, leaving it as clean as a floor.

Then the Indian plants his corn in holes made with a wooden digging stick. He sows just before the rainy season sets in and waters his field, and thereafter he has nothing to do until it is time to harvest. The ground is never broken, and no fertilizer is used.

This method is very wasteful. Three to four plantings can be made in the same clearing, after which the soil is burnt out and exhausted. Then a new place must be found for the field.

T 161 PY 174 166 241 PY [727] In this way great tracts gradually become waste land. Today the population is scarce, and the damage is therefore comparatively small; but before the Conquest the population must have been much greater, judging by the many and large ruined cities. In those days the Maya undoubtedly first cultivated the lands near his town, and as the soil became exhausted, moved farther away. Then one fine day the distance from field to town became so great, the labour of cultivating the distant field and transporting the crops so excessive, that he was forced to look for new country. Very likely the inhabitants of one city would invade the territory of a neighbouring city in their search for cultivable land and this would result in war.

PY 172 174 131 167 361 Dates inscribed on monuments show us that the Maya for some reason abandoned the southern part of their country around the year 600 A. D. After 630 A. D., we find no more dates in this, the Old Empire area, as it has been called; but about the same time dated monuments appear in northern Yucatan.

A general exodus from the southern area must have started at this time, and little by little, tribe after tribe went north, leaving their magnificent cities to a few stragglers—eventually to be claimed

Bl Blom & LaFarge A.E-4, 5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Prehistoric Yucatan NV3

PY 172 194 131 167 361 by the great forest. New cities, one after the other, sprang up in the new country. Several tribes stayed behind, but the leaders and chiefs must have gone north. The tribes still living in the southern area are descendants of those who remained.

PY 174 167 24 Several explanations have been advanced for this migration, among which are disease, war, and change of climatic conditions. Probably there are many reasons for the exodus, of which the exhaustion of the soil is one of the principal.

PY 13 167 174 135 24 The Maya could have gone south. There they would have found igneous mountains. We find Maya speaking tribes in the highlands of Guatemala, but rarely find great buildings in that area. To the north, on the peninsula of Yucatan, the migrants found a limestone country, much like that which they had left. Limestone played a principal role in their whole culture. Lime was necessary for making their principal food, the corn cake (now called tortilla by the Spaniards). Limestone was easy to cut and carve with stone tools, and burnt lime was essential in their temple building. Moreover, the agricultural conditions were similar to those to which they were accustomed. Therefore, after two centuries of moving around, searching for a suitable place, they settled in Yucatan. There they built more great cities, and blossomed out in a magnificent renaissance, finally to reach the climax and then came the downfall of their entire culture.

T 361 Now and then we met a few Indians, but only when we reached the high points of the trail did we see their houses in places of vantage on the hills, away from the trail, so that the inhabitants could look out for strangers.

T 114 Reaching a steep climb, we dismounted and drove our animals along, urging them with Indian cries. The pack animals laboured under their burden, frequently stopping to get their wind, then driven forward again by the yells and whistling of the boys.

T 133 137 114 The trail went straight over the ridge, from the top of which we had a magnificent view of the valley of the Bachilá and Bolontichná rivers. Below we heard the roar of the rivers, and in front lay the nearly vertical wall of the southern side of the valley, an enormous geological fault. Along the backbone of a long narrow ridge we could see our trail winding up to the edge of the wall miles ahead. Nowhere in the huge valley at our feet did we see big forest; all was second growth and patches of grass.

T 133 114 [361] Shortly after noon we had crossed the two rivers, and continued the gradual climb towards the southern rim. As we ascended we

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

saw houses and fields, lying away from the trail, and at a bend before us in the distance a perpendicular wall of yellow and red rock, about 400 meters high, framed in green foliage. A vertical, shining white band, the waterfall "Chegua," cut the center of the red cliff.

Toward evening we made camp by a small stream not far below the rim of the valley, 980 meters above sea level, and rolled ourselves in our blankets just as a downpour started to drum on our tent-fly.

Early in the morning a few Bachajon Indians came stealthily out of the bush to look at our strange outfit. They talked with our Indian carriers, and evidently found out that we were not bad people, as they soon came near to our camp to talk with us.

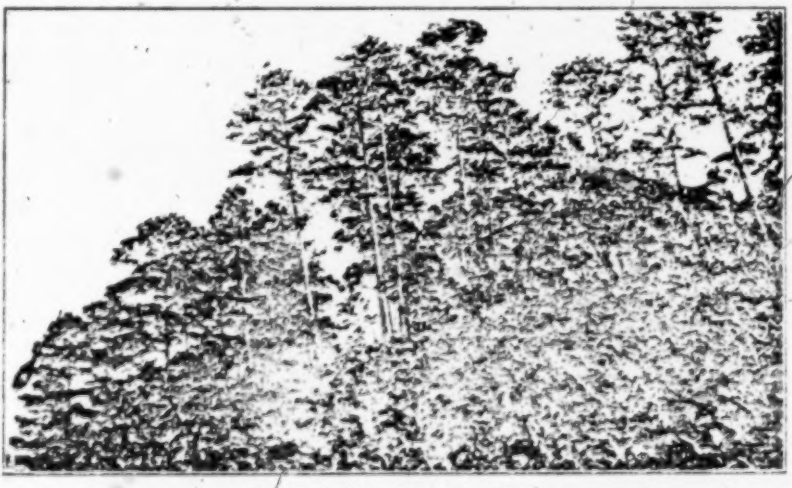

FIG. 188—Bachajon, Chis. Pine Forest.

It was a cool morning and the bottom of the valley was hidden under great soft banks of white mists with the mountains appearing above in sharp silhouette against the morning sky. Soon we reached the rim of the valley and looking back towards the north, saw the many mountain ranges we had crossed and also the Don Juan mountain along the foot of which we rode towards Palenque.

The vegetation changed to low oak-like bush over ground covered with fern-like moss and pretty wild iris. As we rode downward to the next valley new mountain ranges appeared before us and we could see the pine country at a distance. There is no transition from tropical vegetation to pine forest. Change in soil is

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

137 Change in soil is
134 probably the reason for change in vegetation. The tropical forest grows on black humus soil and the pine country is underlain by a red sandstone which weathers into a heavy red clay. The contact of this sandstone with the limestone country on which leaf trees grow lies about an hour's ride north of the village of Bachajon.

[133] The pine country is very hilly, the trees are scattered over a carpet of vivid green grass cut by the strong red line of the soil of the trail like a scar (fig. 195).

114 It was like riding through a magnificent park, up and down the hills and across small streams. Our poor animals had a hard time on the slippery trail. La Farge's horse gave out, and he had to change his saddle to a spare animal.

361 The Bachajon Indian village came in sight, lying on a hill in the
342 middle of the valley. It was well after noon when we reached the
346 dilapidated, grass-roofed and mud-walled huts clustered around the huge ruin of an old Spanish stone church. The Indians use a new church which they have built of the same material as their houses.

122 The house of the Government agent lies in the middle of the
344 village and here we were quartered in a room, the floor of which had just been covered with a carpet of fresh pine needles.

123 The Bachajon Indians are reputed to be unfriendly to all travellers, so we were not surprised when the Indian chief of the village told us that he could not furnish fodder for our animals or men to carry some of our cargo. To all our questions he answered "Mayuk," or in English, "Ain't got none." But when the chief, a little later, heard from our Encanto men that we had been friendly to them, and that furthermore, we were friends of the big father President in Mexico City, he changed his attitude.

648 The Government agent is sent to the Indian village by the civil
[651] authorities of the neighbouring Mexican town of Ocosingo. He is supposed to collect certain taxes, raise labourers for public works
[653] in the Mexican town, and help the Indians with their affairs. He is highly unpopular among the Indians, who counteract his orders through a remarkable system of passive resistance. They say "yes" to everything and do nothing. The only reason the Indians tolerate
[273] him is because he keeps a small store and sells liquor. The Indian is very fond of sugar-cane rum, and every Saturday and Sunday
[123] all the villagers generally get drunk. The agent complained bitterly that the Indians were not selling him any food supplies and was astonished when they sold us chickens and eggs.

361 Most of the Bachajon Indians live hidden away in the bush. Only the families of the chief and the village officials live around the old church ruins.

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

CHAPTER XII

THE OCOSINGO VALLEY

The name Ocosingo is Aztec, signifying the "Place of Pines," a name well chosen, for the valley is enclosed in pine-clad hills. When one stands at the southwestern end of the valley it stretches out in front like a huge natural stadium with the high San Martín mountain lying at the back. The northern and southern sides of the valley consist of two parallel rows of mountains, the inner rows being lower than the outer. The interior ranges slope towards the valley and turn nearly vertical cliff walls towards the very narrow valleys that separate them from the exterior mountains (fig. 196).

The interior ranges are broken up in many points, and this the Maya took advantage of, selecting the highest points for pyramids.

The floor of the valley is grass covered, with scattered groups of pine trees. Here and there lie ranches, mostly inhabited by Mexicans, called Ladinos here. The Ladino is, strictly speaking, a man of mixed Indian and Spanish blood, but the Indians use the term to indicate any Mexican or Spaniard who lives in a town or owns a larger ranch. With the name generally goes a certain amount of education, and the ability to read and write.

Ocosingo town now contains only about 500 inhabitants, living in whitewashed brick houses with red tiled roofs. In the center of the town is a Plaza, at one end of which lies the Palacio Municipal, and at the other end a huge Spanish Colonial church. In front of the church is the public fountain; the water and news supply of the town. All day long girls come here to fill large clay jugs with cool water, led down from the San Martín mountain through an underground canal.

Half of the Plaza is planted with trees, which surround a dilapidated music pavilion, without which no self-respecting Mexican village could exist.

The houses that face the Plaza all have colonnades where one may walk in the shade, and where families bring their rocking chairs in the evenings to sit and watch the crowds of as many as twenty-five men and women who walk around the pavilion, or to look at the horses and cows that feed on the grass growing exuberantly between the paving stones of the Plaza.

The Ocosingo Valley and many smaller valleys adjoining formerly supported large herds of cattle and had considerable trade.

[Text continues on p. 247]

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

123 able when broken by the clattering of horses hoofs against the paving stones.

172 From the Plaza one can see a great part of the valley and sur-
114 rounding mountains. When the sun in the morning falls on the San Martín mountain, one's attention is attracted by a spur on this mountain which strongly resembles a pyramid. We asked about this and were told that it actually was an ancient mound. Therefore, one morning, we rode to the foot of the San Martín.

Reaching a small ranch, we left our horses behind and ascended on foot. A spur of the mountain had in ancient times been levelled and shaped to the form of an immense truncated pyramid, rising in terraces.

778 We had heard that there were caves in the mountainside, and
114 that every year, on the 3rd of May, the Indians come here to worship the god of the mountain. Soon we reached a small cave, or rock shelter, and upon entering saw that a tunnel led into the dark. This we followed, with lighted candles, into a small cave, and there on the floor we found signs of a small altar.*

We took great pains not to disturb anything on the altar, returning to the mouth of the cave, and emerged into the glaring sunlight. We then climbed to the top of the pyramid, and found a large level area in the center of which stood a small mound. On top of the mound Indians had erected a wooden cross and at its foot we found bunches of pine needles, also remnants of burnt copal incense. Evidently this also was a place of Indian worship.

114 Sitting on top of the mound we had the whole Ocosingo valley
133 at our feet. The red roofs of the town lay 500 meters below us.
172 The top of the pyramid, called Chacalchib, is 1,440 meters above
361 sea level. Far away we could see two other hilltops that likewise had been turned into pyramids. On the northern edge of the valley lay Campomtik, and further away on the same side we could distinguish the ruins of Toniná. On the southern side of the valley was the mountain-pyramid called Cololté. All these places were later visited.

133 The valley floor spread out before us. Here and there lay small
137 ranches, and patches of pine forest. Several groups of mounds were
361 easily distinguished, as those of Santa Teresa just outside Ocosingo
172 on the trail to Bachajon. At the head of the valley lay Sivacá, the Indian village.

172 On the level top of the pyramid were rows of stones, indicating
114 old house foundations, but though we made a careful search, we found no monuments.

*For Description, see Chapter XV.

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

Slowly we descended towards the valley, enjoying the magnificent view. The country we were to work in for the following weeks lay before us like a map. About half-way down we encountered another cave, in which we also found an Indian altar. This time the offerings were placed before a small cross, crudely made of wood.

La Farge, as usual, was busy collecting data on the Indians' life and customs, and while he paid a visit to the village Sivacá, the writer set out to explore the Cololté pyramid, sometimes called Hocuchupac, which was said to have a stone idol on it. We also heard that the good inhabitants of Ocosingo were afraid to go to the mountain top, not knowing what the Indians might do.

FIG. 250—Cololté, Chis. Altar on top of the Cololté Pyramid.

Our local guide was eventually persuaded to take me to the ranch of a Ladino boy, by name Cenón, on whose property the pyramid was located.

From Ocosingo we rode along the Rio Grande de la Virgen until it joined the Jataté River, which we crossed and soon came to the ranch of Cenón, who was in the field, but came out when we called. Though the pyramid, as stated, was on his property, he was not eager to take me to it, and when he finally agreed, he first armed himself with an old 30-30 Winchester.

Following long, narrow, pine ridges we approached the pyramid. It was beautiful country with scattered pine and grass below.

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

172 114 At last we had drawn all the carved stones in Ocosingo, so, preceded by a gang of Tzeltal-speaking Indians from Sivacá, we rode out to the ruins of Toniná. The road led through the centre of the valley, crossing the Rio Grande de la Virgen over a bridge which had recently been reconstructed after the rebels of the last revolution [137] had destroyed it. We were riding through rolling grass-covered country with clusters of pine trees and small groups of mounds scattered here and there. The Campomtik pyramid stood out sharply against the surrounding dark pine forest. We turned off from the main trail to the north and soon came in sight of the ruins, which Stephens, eighty-five years before, had come over the same trail to visit. Several explorers had been before him, but none had

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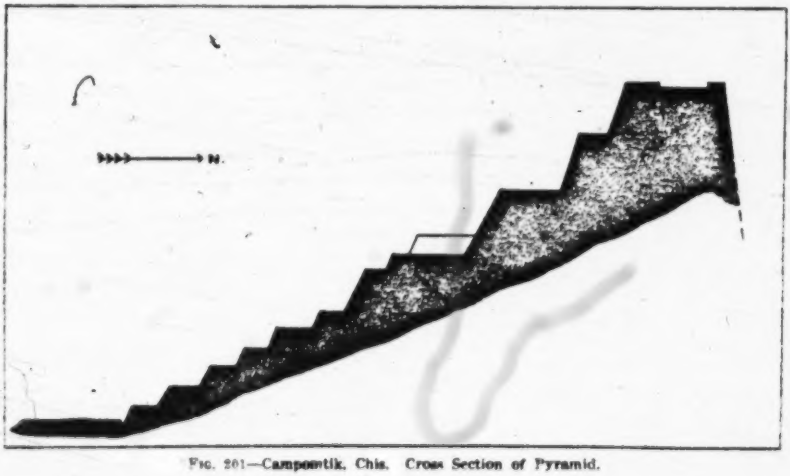

Fig. 201—Campomtik, Chis. Cross Section of Pyramid.

172 114 given such a vivid description of the ruined city we were now to explore.

Following the northern mountain range, we came to the Plaza at the foot of the ruins, and rode up to the first terrace as Stephens had done. There we tied our horses and proceeded on foot. Don Aureo Cruz, owner of the land on which the ruins lie, guided us through a part of the ruins that had never been recorded. We reached the Temple of the Wooden Lintel, saw the "winged globe" drawn by Catherwood, then entered the sanctuary. Before us was the wooden lintel which has been lying over the door for nearly 1500 years, and which made Stephens marvel. Then and there we drank a small tumbler of the local cane wine in memory of John Lloyd Stephens and F. Catherwood, among the first to break the trails we

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Bachajón

13 | the Guatemala border, which it overlaps at Gracias á Dios. They
10 | do not reach the highest part of the mountains. For the most part, they live in isolated tribal groups, although in some places, notably in Ocosingo Valley, they are attached to *haciendas* and *fincas*. Much of the easternmost country marked in the maps as belonging to them and the Chol is actually uninhabited wilderness, or, if occupied at all, is Lacandone territory.

101 Their immediate neighbours of the Highlands are the Zotzil and
197 Chaneabal. The former speak a language differentiated from Tzeltal only by a shift of *a, e,* and *b* to Zotzil *o, i,* and *m,* respectively.* Chaneabal is spoken by a small group near Comitan. The people of that place say that the language is simply Tzeltal influenced by Mames contact. The list given in Appendix III, seems to bear this out. To the north, and around Tumbalá, are the Chol Indians, whose language is quite distinct, but, of all the other Mayance tongues, probably the nearest to the Highland group.

197 The language itself has been variously named Cendal, Tzendal, Cendales, Tzental, and Tzeltal. I have taken the latter form, as it most nearly represents the Indians' own form, *ts'eltal,* varied in careless speech to *tceltal.* The villages are spoken of as tribes, be-
197 cause each one forms a separate, self-governing unit. There is no
628 evidence of cohesion within the language-group as a whole save during certain periods of uprisings. Individual villages may resemble tribes of another speech more closely than they do those of
[104] their own. The Mexican spelling of Tzeltal names is given first, followed by the phonetic spelling (See Appendix III), and the translation, if known.

101 The Bachajon live on the threshold of the pine country. Their
[131] farms may be found hidden away in the thick jungle land of ma-
[137] hogany and palms, through which their little hidden trails lead to houses tucked away out of sight of alien travelers. Altogether, they
[161] are estimated at five thousand families, but it is doubtful whether evidences of more than fifty farms could be seen by one passing along the trail through the heart of their country. The capital, Bachajon Village, is among the pines. There, periodically, the
[648] Spaniards used to round them up, that they might be more easily policed, and for the benefit of the church established there. Once
[346] there was a fine, stone church and a neat Cabildo with white walls,
[344] colonnade, and tiled roof. Both have been wrecked by the Indians, apparently because they did not like to be reminded of alien domination, for from the wreckage of the old church, they took tiles to roof their new one, and they have a straw-thatched Cabildo for the Maestro, or government agent.

*Starr (1903) quoting Sanchez (1890).

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Bachajón

The country near the village has been farmed out long ago; now the fields lie at a distance in the jungle. After every concentration, the Indians drift away again like blown smoke. Today most of the houses are rotten, sagging, with gaping doors. The paths are grown up with weeds, huge, old moss-covered crosses lean at crazy angles by the main trails. Over all broods the frame of the sacked church, huge stone walls with rank vegetation around them, and a twisted, unhealthy oak-tree on one side, like a composition by Piranesi.

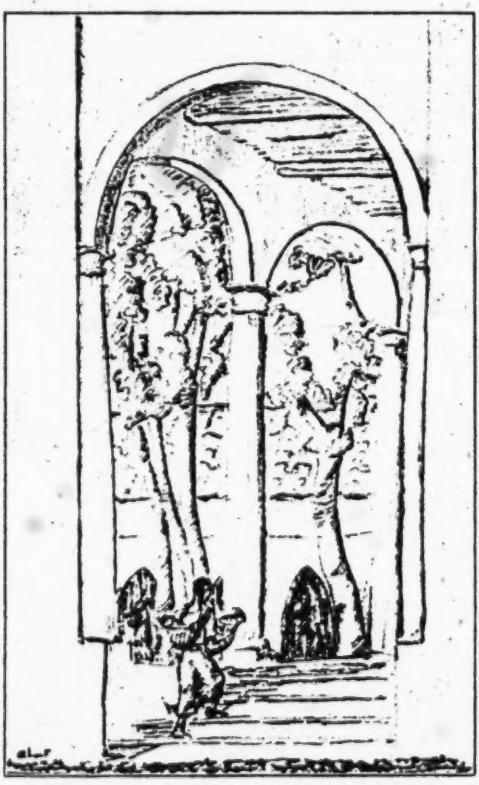

FIG. 277—Ocosingo, Chia. Colonnade on the Plaza.

Ocosingo Valley and its neighbours furnish a transition towards the real highlands. The valleys are fertile and green, ringed in with ranges of steep, rich hills. The soil in the lower parts is light; here palms and pines grow together, with a luxuriance of rich grass that makes an ideal grazing country. Through the valleys are large and small ranches of Ladinos and old Spanish families. The bigger ones, such as San Antonio, Quechil, and Achin in the Ocosingo Valley, San José Reforma and El Real beyond the San José Pass, and Tecojá in its own valley, each has a village of Indian labourers attached to them. The natives' houses are rather better that the average, and often tile-roofed (fig. 278). The Indians of each ranch function more or less as a tribe, governed by the owner of the ranch, conducting their own worship at its chapel. A few Indians own scattered, independent farms. Sivacá (*sivak ha'*, "Gunpowder Water"), near Ocosingo on the trail to Tenango, is a true village, self-governing, with its own *alcalde*, under the supervision of a Ladino *maestro*. All these groups come together at

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

Chapter XVI

THE HIGHLAND TZELTAL

On the Fourth of July we left Ocosingo for the last stretch in to this fabled city of San Cristóbal, about which we had so long been hearing, up into the real mountains, the country of the highland tribes. We thought to spend the day in quiet travel, without fireworks, but our animals had other ideas. El Viejito, the old, white horse, led off by giving out under his pack right at the start. Then the bay mare cut loose, distributing her load over several acres. 114

The celebration finally being calmed, we reached Sivacá, at the foot of the long climb. The men who knew us were away in the fields. A few frightened women misdirected us as best they could, the animals got loose again among the orange trees and winding paths, and it was another half hour before, to the accompanying enthusiastic squeals of the local pigs, we finally got them rounded up and on the right way.

Right behind Sivacá the trail stands up on end to climb the first of the series of ramparts that lie like a defense about the highland country. It was very much like trying to ride up a gutter on the side of a house. The narrow trail was also the bed of a feeble brook. It was worn so deep that the packs rubbed along the sides. We pushed and pulled and tugged. There was the usual repetition of fallen horses and packs to be put on again. Thus for two hours, slipping and scrambling, until at last we came to a level place where an old wooden cross, decorated with offerings of flowers marked the top of the pass—1,660 meters, 600 meters (about 1,900 feet) above Ocosingo. From there on, as our trail dipped and rose along the uneven plateau, we had occasional glimpses through the tall fir trees back to the ranges behind Ocosingo Valley, and far over the hills of the Tzendales and the Lacandone country, looking very cool and blue. The trees were fine, and widely spaced; below were good grass, patches of pine-needles, and scars of red earth. We followed a succession of ridges, not very notable in themselves, but tiring to the animals after their long climb and earlier celebrations. In the late afternoon it grew cooler, and stimulated by that, and the beauty of the country, we did not know that we were weary. 114 133 137

One of the pack animals, a game little sandy-coloured pony with a Roman nose, who drew his neck back like a camel's when he traveled, was making better time than the rest. So Blom, on his 114

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Tenango

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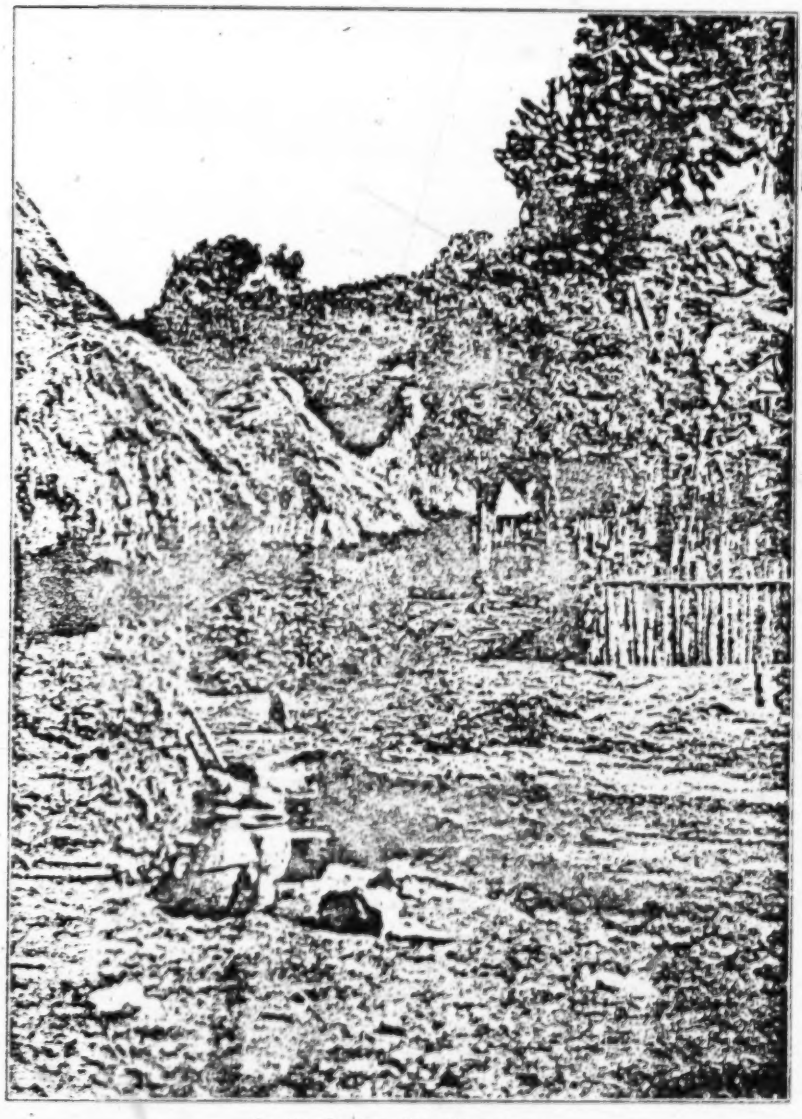

FIG. 311—Tenango, Chis. Street Scene.

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Cancuc

boulders with care. It still is broad in most places, and has reasonable grades. We climbed to a rather desolate upland of wind-swept grass with a few crooked trees. There was some traffic on the road. We passed a group of Tenejapeños going down to the hot country to carry sugar. The men were ragged and woolly, like those we had seen at Salto de Agua, and their women, in short blue skirts and white blouses gorgeously ornamented with gold and crimson silk, were remarkable for their very pink cheeks showing through dark brown colouring.

The town of Cancuc (*kank'uk*) lies on the rounded shoulder of a long ridge that juts up above the high moors commanding a tremendous view North, West, and South over a jumbled mass of mountain ranges, like a herd of great elephants shouldering away to the horizon. A wind blows day and night, the trees are small and stunted, and the general effect is one of bleakness and height. At an altitude of 1,440 meters, with the unresting wind, it is always cold. The highroad climbs from a ravine up into the village where a small plaza is laid out on a level place. On our left was the big, white church, still well preserved. Opposite it, the Cabildo surprised us, a neat building with tile roof and white columned portico, built in President Diaz' time. Round about were some tumbling and ruined huts, and behind, the village rose on rough terraces crudely faced with stone.

Cancuc has a stormy history. It was the center of the famous rebellion of 1712, the subject of Brinton's "Maria Candelaria."* According to Starr (1904) who passed through here, there is a tradition that the men's long hair, covering their ears, is so worn in memory of the clipped ears which their ancestors received at that time. Recently, there has been political dissension in the form of a dragging feud, and a series of small fights and murders has resulted in those left of the defeated party abandoning the village and setting up their houses in the bush. It is from this that one sees so many huts deserted and beginning to disintegrate, adding to the general cheerless aspect of the place.

We were well received at the Cabildo, where the village officials with their silver-headed canes turned up shortly to look us over. They were younger men than most of the officials we had met previously, and a pretty tough looking crew, much what one would expect of a group that had attained office largely by means of the machete. The people on the whole rather resemble the Bachajon physically, being of a small-limbed type with an average height for men of about 160 centimeters, and nearly beardless. The men wear tunics cut as at Tenango, but decorated with red and yellow em-

*Brinton, 1887; Pineda, 1888.

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

Cancuc
Tenejapa

From Cancuc the road falls slowly away, then it climbs to the steep side of the ridge and at last dips precipitously to a covered bridge over a narrow ravine. All along on both sides little cornfields alternate with second growth. Ahead, the same great palisade that we saw from Tenango rises in a green wall, patched with fields and broken here and there by outcrops of cliffs and hanging valleys. We passed a dribbling of traffic, Indians on foot, and at the bridge met a family of Mexicans noisily eating a picnic lunch. The ravine was deep, rock-walled, with a roaring stream in the shadows of the bottom. From the other side of it the palisade rose immediately, looking almost perpendicular and indefinitely high to us as we contemplated it. The road assumed a stiff grade, rising in a series of zig-zags that gained painfully to the top. Straight up, almost like a ruled line, lay the Indian trail, taking no account of the twists and turns of the road. Our carriers from Cancuc, who took on the cargo that the Tenango men had carried the day before, had gone up that fearsome climb. We tried it, but the horses slid and fell back on their haunches, and we ourselves could barely keep our footing. So we continued along the road, turning and turning, seeming never to gain, and fearing that our animals would never make it. The heat of the sun was thrown back by the hillside and the road.

We toiled on. Low growth and brush on the side of the road gave no shade. The dust rose high. The air, for all the heat, began to have a pleasant crispness that reminded us of high altitudes in other countries. Then we smelt a familiar smell which we ignored until its persistent recurrence forced us to look, see, and believe—that blackberries grow wild in Chiapas! The event of the next hours amused Lazaro greatly, for here in Mexico we found ourselves among familiar northern flowers and wild fruits, buttercups, dandelions, wild roses, blackberries, strawberries, all strange to him. We passed an Indian farm, stuck into a tiny hanging valley, where peach trees and alligator pears were growing together in the cornfield.

At the top of the pass in a shallow V-shaped cut, the barometer read 2,100 meters, a climb of 600 meters—about 1,900 feet—in two hours.

The country changed beyond here to steep ravines, high cliffs, rushing, cold brooks, and tall, dark fir trees clothing the rocks. The tilled fields disappeared, the scattered houses, and stick fences. It was a wild, shaggy country—a perfect setting, we thought, for the home of the rough Tenejapeños that we had seen along the road.

Near evening, a road forked off to the right, leading to a split in a wall of high cliffs through which we could see, already dark with

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970

NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

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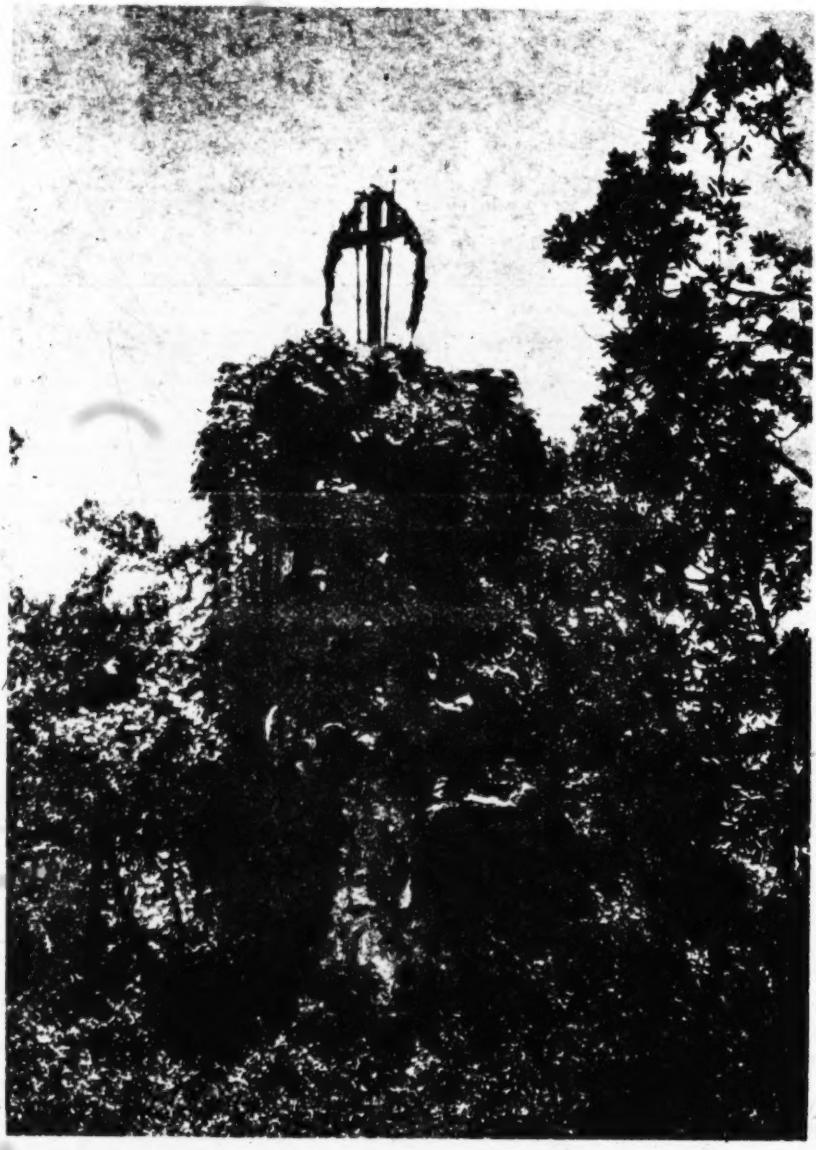

Plate 1. Head of Palm where the ancestors stand and watch over the town. The cross, standing about twelve feet high and adorned with an arch of pine boughs and flowers, tops a jutting rock about thirty feet high. Behind the rock is the hill with the cave in which the ancestors were reputed to live.

American Highway which connects San Cristobal de las Casas with Comitan. They are 50 and 44 kilometers, respectively, from San Cristobal. Aguacatenango is closer to the branch road that continues south from the Highway to Venustiano Carranza, in the lowlands.

Both villages are 2,000 meters above sea level, placed in a slightly raised terrain in the valley floor.

The vegetation climaxes surrounding the settlements are the same: woodlands of pine and oak, the second predominating, grasslands which for the most part are secondary growths in abandoned agricultural plots, and thorny bushes which the inhabitants of the valleys utilize for building fences.

The range of cultivated plants is the same in the two villages, including several varieties of corn and beans, squash and a few greens, while other edible plants grow wild in the edges of streams and rocky places unsuited for cultivation (Kaplan in McQuown et al., 1959, Part II, Section 6).

The soils are mainly limestone base, calcareous clay loam and loam transported, both territories receiving the same amount of rain. Surface water is drained internally within the basin of the Rio Blanco, and in the edges of the village of Aguacatenango, forms, during the rainy season, a small lagoon, where a variety of small fish thrive (Wagner, in McQuown et al., 1959, Part II, Section 5).

The fauna include small deer, ocelots, snakes (poisonous and non-poisonous), domestic and field rats, and other small animals.